Creation of safe and secure society
Crisis management systems of the government
— Present situation and challenges of crisis management —

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The government's crisis management systems

The Cabinet Secretariat is an organization that assists the Prime Minister, as head of the Cabinet, and the Chief Cabinet Secretary. It supports the decision-making of the Cabinet and policy management as driven by the Prime Minister's Office. The crisis management responsibilities of the Cabinet Secretariat have a scope as diverse as natural disasters, accidents, terrorism, and armed attacks. Expert crisis-management staff are assigned, with the Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary for Crisis Management in charge, to respond quickly to emergencies anytime during the 24 hours of the day.

Table 1 Major crisis management systems of the government as improved after the Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake

February 1995	Cabinet meeting approves a system of transmitting information to the Prime Minister's Office in the event of a major earthquake
Ditto	Emergency Assembly Team established (for major natural disasters)
June 1995	Emergency Fire Response Team and Interprefectural Emergency Rescue Unit established
June to December 1995	Disaster Measures Basic Law amended in the light of the Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake
October 1995	Interprefectural Medical and Disaster Information System improved
March 1996	Disaster Relief Operation Reflex Unit of the Self-Defense Forces established
April 1996	Crisis Management Center of the former Prime Minister's Office established
May 1996	Cabinet Information Collection Center established
May 1996	Disaster Hub Hospital System established
April 1998	Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary for Crisis Management assigned
Ditto	Cabinet meeting approves initial government measures to be taken in the event of serious terrorism
December 1999	Special Measures of Nuclear Disaster Act enacted
April 2000	Operation of housing for government workers in charge of disaster prevention commenced
December 2001	Minister of State for Disaster Management assigned
November 2001	Cabinet meeting approves initial government measures against suspicious armed spy vessels
April 2002	Crisis Management Center of the new Prime Minister's Office established
June 2003	Law Concerning the Nation's Response to Foreign Military Attacks enacted and Emergency Situation Response Expert Committee organized
November 2003	Cabinet meeting approves initial government response systems for emergencies
Ditto	Emergency Assembly Team established for various cases
January 2004	Waterfront Crisis Management Team and Director General for Crisis Management at Ports and Airports assigned
June 2004	Law concerning Measures for Protection of the Civilian Population in Armed Attack Situations enacted
December 2004	Action plan for prevention of terrorism formulated

The government's crisis management systems were consolidated after the Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in January 1995. At that time, the Prime Minister's Office was slow at taking action and the government showed a lack of crisis management skills. There was no organization or staff in charge of crisis management within the Prime Minister's Office. Taking into account the lessons learned from the earthquake, the government's crisis management systems have been enhanced considerably. (Table 1)

Initial measures of the Prime Minister's Office

The Cabinet Information Collection Center monitors information relating to unfolding emergencies. On detecting an emergency, the center

promptly informs the Prime Minister, Chief Cabinet Secretary, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary, and other high-ranking officials of the fact. At the same time, the Crisis Management Center in the Prime Minister's Office comes into operation and the staff of the Cabinet Secretariat and relevant ministries and agencies are called to the center. In the case of a major earthquake, the Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary and Emergency Assembly Team (made up of director generals and others from relevant ministries and agencies) assemble within about half an hour to get a grasp of the situation, decide on government policy to deal with the emergency, and secure inter-ministerial coordination on actions under the initiative of the Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary. The Prime Minister, Chief Cabinet Secretary, and cabinet ministers may gather if necessary. If the situation is serious, a headquarters is established to implement countermeasures, such as the Headquarters for Major Disaster Management, Headquarters for Urgent Disaster Management, Headquarters for Emergency Situation Management, and Headquarters for Military Attacks. (Figure 1) To advise the public of the government's response, the Chief Cabinet Secretary gives a press conference whenever necessary. Centering on the Prime Minister's Office, the activities and resources of the various ministries and agencies are controlled and the government's collective strength is brought into play to deal with the situation. Drills are carried out to ensure that, in the event a strong local earthquake hits the metropolis directly, the Prime Minster and all cabinet ministers can promptly gather at the Crisis Management Center to establish the Headquarters for Urgent Disaster Management within about two hours of the occurrence of the earthquake.
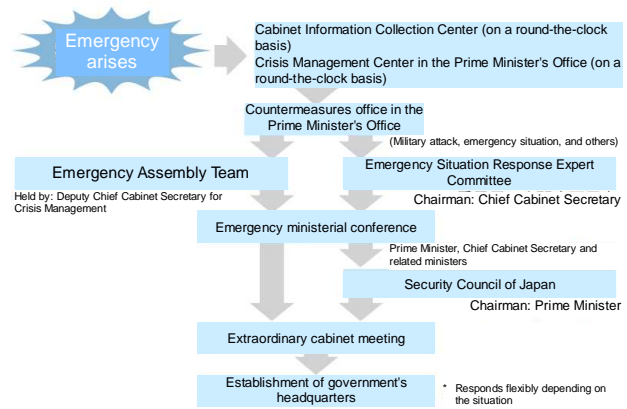

Figure 1   General flow of the government's initial response in case of an emergency

Sophistication of information systems

Crisis management begins with obtaining a grasp of the emergency situation. Decisions cannot be made or subsequent actions taken without knowledge of what is going on. The prompt and accurate gathering of information such as the actual occurrence of an emergency, conditions on the ground, and the response of concerned organizations requires appropriate systems to be in place to collect, transmit, integrate, and share information. The input of primary information, dependent primarily on manual work, is a major challenge and effective use of systems cannot be made without getting this part of the procedure right.

Optimum allocation of resources

To cope with a large-scale emergency, the functions of ministries and agencies need to be utilized in an efficient manner. Resources need to be managed in the following arenas: allocation of units of the Fire-Defense Agency, National Police Agency, Self-Defense Forces, and Maritime Safety Agency responsible for on-the-spot rescue and relief operations; allocation of aircraft and medical teams for the wide-area medical transportation of patients in serious condition; and allocation of relief supplies to refugees. The allocation of these resources needs to be corrected in response to a situation that may vary from

hour to hour. There is a need to develop practical methods of optimizing the allocation of limited resources.

Emergency preparedness

It is impossible to appropriately cope with an emergency without preparing for that emergency. The anticipated damage, procedures for taking action, and policies to allocate resources need to be prepared in advance as closely as possible in line with the actual situation. For this purpose, it is necessary to perform simulations that model events as exactly as possible. In addition, drills need to be implemented in various stages to ensure that a situation is coped with quickly and correctly. Methods of conducting various types of drills, including map-based drills and actual field drills, have been improved. A large-scale drill requires time, cost, and labor in preparation, so practical, more easily and routinely implementable training methods need to be developed.

Total planning

In the case of an emergency, it is necessary to respond promptly, limit the damage, and bring the emergency situation to an end. Crisis management capabilities should be enhanced through an iterative process of Prepare, Respond, and Improve. (Figure 2) To achieve this, it is important to prepare a total plan for a crisis management system and improve the system by identifying weak aspects so as to speed up the response, mitigate the damage, and prevent reoccurrence of the emergency. This total planning approach involves various factors, including legal systems, organizational structures, human and material resources, and individual technologies and is a challenge to be addressed in the future.

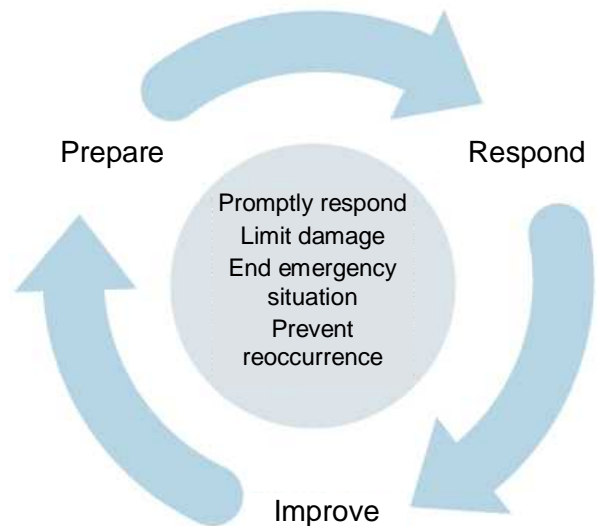Prepare Respond

Promptly respond
Limit damage
End emergency
situation
Prevent
reoccurrence

Improve

Figure 2　Cycle of crisis management